TRUE LOVERS.

REMARKS MADE BY JOSEPH B. CUMMING,

INTRODUCING

Gen. Matthew Calbraith Butler,

ORATOR OF THE DAY,

ON THE OCCASION OF

Decorating Confederate Soldiers' Graves

AT THE AUGUSTA CEMETERY,

Memorial Day,

1895.

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WHERE in all the world is presented such a scene as this? When in all time shall we look for such an occasion? Some with broader knowledge or richer memories may find a ready answer to this inquiry. My own limited vision discovers nothing like it elsewhere than in this Southern land, or in any other time than in these years which have followed the great War between the States. It is true that in a few weeks our brethren of the North, when their loitering spring-time shall have reached the stage where ours is today, when for them then as for us now—

> "Spring rolls in her sea green surf
> In flowery foaming waves."

will assemble in like places and for like purposes; and some on-looker with vision only, but without reflection or memory, may deem the occasions altogether similar. But indeed, indeed how wide apart! The difference between victory and defeat. The difference between success and failure. The difference between a cause that is won and a cause that was lost. The difference between the swelling strains of triumph and the minor chords of a requiem.

How common in all times and in all countries has it been, by anniversaries and celebrations, to keep alive the memory of national triumph. But when before us has a people given its work of hand and heart to perpetuate the story of its conquest? When did Frenchmen weave garlands and floral wreaths for the anniversary of Waterloo, though coming when the gorgeous month of June carpets their fair land with flowers? When did Prussia ever establish celebrations in the rich autumnal harvest time in memory of Jena? When did the Conscript Fathers decree "a Roman

Holiday" for the fatal day of Cannæ? Nowhere, methinks, save in our land, and never save in our time has a people busied itself to preserve the memory of its defeat. Why is this? Permit me to answer in part in language which I used more than twenty years ago:

"Strange spectacle, and yet not strange! We were conquered, but our cause was just. We were fallen, but not dishonored. Our efforts had failed, but they had made the world ring with our praises. We had the irreparable and the irrecoverable to lament: to blush for, nothing."

But this answer, considered sufficient then, has ceased to satisfy. The reasons then given were negative in their nature—sufficient, perhaps, to explain why for a season we were not ashamed to keep alive the memory of our failure, but inadequate to account for the continued survival of an active living spirit, which at the end of thirty long years still refuses to die.

I think I find the true reason in my own heart, and I believe I would seek it successfully in yours. Indeed, strange as the declaration may sound to some, that great war was fought on the part of the South more on a sentiment than any other war in all history. We went to war not for conquest, not for glory, not to escape oppression. But a proud and high-spirited people flew to arms to defend what they considered their sacred right, from high-handed and presumptuous interference, albeit the right itself was little better than an abstraction. Nothing sordid mingled with our motives. No vulgar ambition stained our high resolve. No selfishness tainted our lofty aspirations. We embraced the cause in the spirit of lovers. True lovers all were we—and what true lover ever loved less because the grave had closed over the dear and radiant form?

And so we—we at least, who as men and women inhaled the true spirit of that momentous time—come together on these occasions not only with the fresh new flowers in our hands, but with the old memories in our thoughts and the old, but ever fresh, lover spirit in our hearts, and seek to make these occasions not unworthy of the cause we loved unselfishly and of these its sleeping defenders.

In one respect at least how fittingly have we ordered this occasion. The orator of the day, whom I shall have the honor to introduce to you, is most fitly chosen. Fitly chosen for his ancestry's sake—those Ormonds and Butlers who three centuries ago in the Emerald Isle fought in knightly fashion for their native land—a race of gentlemen, who through three generations have been found sword in hand, ready to strike a blow—aye and striking it right doughtily—for this their country, in the Revolution, in 1812, in Indian wars, in Mexico, and, latest of all, in that vast conflict which shook all the land and resounded through all its borders. Well, too, have we chosen on his own merits —the bold rider, the dashing sabreur, the gallant leader, the wise and able commander—the soldier whose twenty-eighth year found him, in right of his own brave deeds and honorable wounds, a Major-General of cavalry in the glorious army of Lee. Thrice well chosen as the incarnation of those sentiments and principles, which made the old South what it was and the war it waged an undying glory. Him, gallant soldier, distinguished statesman, representative and type of the best Southern manhood, I now present to you—General Matthew Calbraith Butler.